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ABSTRACT

The literature of Polish, Greek and Italian American women has been largely neglected in the American literary tradition. Through an analysis of female characters in a number of white ethnic autobiographical novels, this paper stresses the importance of an awareness of women's struggles which coincide with immigration history. It also points out the movement of women in literature from the struggle for survival toward the achievement of self-actualization. (MK)

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Struggle, Sorrow, and Joy:

Women in White Ethnic American Literature

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In recent years we have become aware of the world of our fathers. In American literary history, however, a world we are now only becoming conscious of is that of our immigrant mothers. Beginning with the flood-tide of European immigration into the United States in the late nineteenth century and continuing to the present time, a literature exists that tells us what it meant and still means to be white ethnic and female in America. Written by the daughters of those women who had the dream of America or by women who sympathetically observed the first generation immigrants and their descendants, this autobiographical fiction constitutes a vital strain in our literary tradition that deserves recognition.

I am specifically interested here in the literature about Polish, Greek, and Italian-American women whose roots are in non-Anglo Europe. Our paternalistic and Anglo-oriented dominant tradition has finally accorded recognition to Jewish women's literature, but other white ethnic groups still suffer neglect or misunderstanding. Perhaps neglect is due, in part, to a dislike by some critics for autobiographical fiction which may seem less "pure" than straight fiction. An early New York Times review, for example, of Our Natupski Neighbors (1916) by Edith Miniter, dismissed it as a documentary with just a thin overlay of fiction.[1] The unusual nature of this ethnic literature, however, is that it must impose form on the chaotic materials of life and simultaneously create out of the imagination. As Diane Johnson has pointed out, the access to root meanings allows the autobiographer to handle what is essentially true.[2] Neglect, too, may be

connected to a lingering "melting pot" literary theory that literature must be universal and rise above time, place, and sex. Recent studies in both ethnicity and in feminine literature refute that theory. In his Idols of the Tribe, Harold Isaacs demonstrates that ethnicity is an essential order of human existence. Our basic identity stems from our body, and by extension from our birthplace, our name, language, history, religion, and nationality.[3] As to feminine literature, criticism like The Female Imagination by Patricia Spacks and Literary Women by Ellen Moers verifies that there is in it a feminine tradition that is distinctive in its portrayal of "heroinism" (Moers' term) and in its special awareness of women's struggles.[4] Possibly, there is still another reason for neglect. Some feminists may fear the divisiveness of isolating particular white ethnic groups as my study seems to. This fear is unfounded, for the literature of white ethnic women is a unifying force in that it brings all of us to a better understanding of ourselves and each other.

The literature of Polish, Greek, and Italian-American women, while by no means homogeneous, contains a special awareness of women's struggles, and that awareness coincides with immigration history. It is instructive at this point to recall the five needs A. H. Maslow has identified as basic for all humans: the physiological for food and shelter, safety and security, belongingness or affection, esteem, and self-actualization.[5] A study of Polish, Greek, and Italian-American fiction reveals that our first generation mothers and grandmothers fought chiefly and understandably for fulfillment of the first four needs. Survival oriented and resilient, they were more than just passive agents upon whom a new and alien culture imposed itself, but were active participants, even heroines, who also contributed to

shaping and changing the new culture. As heroines they often contain the mythic female archetypal experience of the cyclical and recurring forces of birth, menstruation, mating, child bearing, aging, and death. For the more affluent of the first generation, as well as for succeeding generations who have recreated the lives of the first, the struggle has been beyond survival and toward self-actualization. In two of the novels the heroines are the authors themselves who ultimately achieve selfhood through their struggle to become writers about their ethnic pasts.

There is another persistent, unique pattern that may be misunderstood. The roles of women are frequently traditional and developed within the framework of a family, a shared group, or an institution. The mother-daughter relationship, that basic biological bond, for example, is intense and crucial. The dominant Anglo-American literary tradition has, by contrast, admired writers such as Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, and Kurt Vonnegut, who have favorably depicted the anarchic individual, the isolato, and the rebel. Its few heroines, like those created by Henry James and Kate Chopin, follow the same pattern. In ethnic women's literature, however, even when a woman rebels she becomes what she is and fulfills her destiny in a family or shared group or in responsibility to others. This is not to say there is not anger or resentment in this fiction. The authors at times direct hostility against the dominant, prejudiced, oppressive society, and they show frustration over how to meet one's needs while being ethnic and female. A steady quality of this literature is its frankness and honesty. But anger and disappointment, even tragedy, are usually alleviated by irony and humor. Laughter among the oppressed is a healthy survival device, a way for these women to cope with their difficult lives.

Irony, of course, contains a double vision. And doubleness is the nature of this fiction just as it is the nature of immigration. The woman writer is poised between two worlds. She looks backwards to European culture, or what is representative of it in America, and she senses dislocation, sorrow, and loss, and is a memorialist. She also clearly sees that the new life is better than the old and so retains a degree of optimism and a commitment to her predecessor's dream.[6]

I want to now consider representative Polish-American autobiographical fiction. Edith Miniter wrote Our Natupski Neighbors out of her experience as a New England woman who witnessed Polish immigration into Massachusetts. She recounts the immigrants' elemental struggle, their children's search for self-actualization, and the New Englanders' responses. Following the historical migration, the novels opens in 1895 with Mrs. Natupski still in Europe. She is the mother of one son and pregnant with another. Her husband Kani has already migrated to America. He quickly despairs of raising the money to send for his family, buys a worn-out farm, and marries another woman for her savings and because the farm needs a woman. Then Marinki Natupski sells her few possessions and raises the passage money. With two sons (the baby is born during the difficult crossing), she arrives in West Holly, Massachusetts. Physical survival requires immediate decisions. To Kani, boys are more of an asset than the girl baby belonging to the second Mrs. Natupski, so he decides in favor of Marinki. The second wife's decision is to immediately abandon both husband and baby Statia and find a new husband. Marinki, whose life pattern is set, enters the run down farmhouse: "Dropping wearily into the broken rocking-chair . . . and baring her bosoms to the two infants, "Siedziec w domu ('I am come home'), said Mrs.

Natupski" (p. 17).

Miniter's authorial role is one of satirical resentfulness over the discrepancy between America's democratic ideals and its practices, and of commitment to the ultimate worth of the ideals. When West Hollyians first meet the Polish, they organize a schoolhouse meeting to discuss the immigrant "problem." A nativist neighbor asks, "Be we going to stand this invasion or be we going to drive 'em out . . . before any more gets in? America for the Americans is my cry. . . . What's law and order for?: (pp. 24-25) The passage still has an all too familiar ring. The most kindly neighbors have misguided good intentions, bringing toothbrushes and hygiene lessons to the desperate family. Nor does Miniter evade the brutalizing effects on the Natupskis of working early and late and eating little. Here is a representative ironic passage:

> Mrs. Natupski, having done four hours' work before breakfast, swallowed a few unsavory morsels, and then beat the children all round, this being her method to insure their willingness that she should depart to the field. As it was haying time she did her full share of loading, raking over, even mowing hay (pp. 99-100).

Inevitably, America causes a "holocaust" on the family's values. Miniter reminds us of the old Polish proverb, "Always you can hear the tears in their laughter" (p. 170). Marinki sees the way her neighbors live. When her children scorn her for her old world customs and poor dress, her self-esteem is wounded. Then her husband appropriates the meager savings that she has earmarked for a layette. She rebels and, after that particular childbirth, stays in bed the conventional ten days and never returns to the fields. Thus she achieves her "emancipation" and human dignity.

The novel then takes up the second generation that strives for selfhood. Statia changes her name from Anastasia to Annie and chooses a Polish American husband and the traditional role of wife and mother. Kazia takes

another route into society--she loves poetry, determines never to marry, and becomes a schoolteacher. Two other daughters (and several sons) establish their own personalities, one by outwitting her father's scheme to make a lot of money through drug dealing. Ahead of her time, Miniter emphasizes that West Holly has something to learn from the Polish.[7]

Our Natupski Neighbors concentrates on an isolated family's experience. A later novel, Pulaski Place (1950) by Ruth Tabrah, has a broader scope but is less successful.[8] The value of Pulaski Place lies, however, in its realistic pictures of ethnic women's lives. Tabrah is concerned with Polish Americans in urban post-World War II Milltown, a thinly disguised Buffalo, New York, where Tabrah grew up. Steve Kowalski has been away to war and upon his return finds it difficult because of conflicting cultural claims to be the first Polish American on the Milltown police force. Irene Kubala Kowalski is the wife who has loyally waited for him for four years and has lived with his family. Having grown up in Pulaski Place, and having suffered rebuffs and rejection when she has ventured outside, Irene wants to remain within the Polish community's protective confines while Steve does not. Besides the ethnic struggle, there is also class conflict. Helena Lopata has well-documented sociologically that class conflict exists within Polonia.[9] In Pulaski Place the mother Marya Kowalski looks down on some of her neighbors, particularly the slovenly Cuznyars whose daughter Rosie is a prostitute, and on the demented Veronica who is poor and threatens to hex people. Tabrah draws likeable characterizations of Marya and Irene. The pretty, religious, dependent Irene has conventional attitudes. Marya is the family's central strength. Tabrah only partly senses through her resentment of them that those with more negative roles are victims of the

class and economic structure. She accurately shows, however, that Polish-American women of necessity will continue to occupy a double cultural position. The birth of Irene's baby closes the novel on an optimistic note.

Two second generation Greek-American writers recreate the struggle of Greek-American women. As Tabrah does, Roxanne Cotsakis portrays roles of women rooted in cyclical archetypal patterns and traditional family structures. While her The Wing and the Thorn (1952) focuses on Yannis (John) Pantellis who at sixteen in 1906 migrates from his Peloponnesus village, Cotsakis' best insights are into women's situations.[10] The prostitute the lonely man visits in New York and to whom he takes presents is indifferent and amused. An American girl merely flirts with him and is astonished when he proposes. A third girl, regretting their hasty marriage, gets an annulment. Then John sends back to Greece for Lula, his childhood peasant sweetheart, and they settle down in a southern city. Although their marriage is enduring and solid and their lives rewarding--he becomes a successful businessman and they have two fine children--Lula is the old world woman in the new world who continues to suffer from stress and anxiety.

Coming of age after World War II, the oldest child Maria rebels against some of the old ways while accepting others. She rejects an arranged marriage. When her religious father won't hear of the marriage she desires to his godson, a relationship considered a blood tie by the Greek church, Maria seeks her mother's help:

> Bringing the matter into the open without the usual hedging shocked them both. They stared at each other. . . . 'Your Papa would not talk, Lula sighed. 'I did not press him. He was very much upset.'
> 'I'm going to marry Dimitri, Mama. . . .'
> 'It is impossible, Maria. . . . It is against our church laws. . . . And if you think you can be happy discarding everyone and everything in

your life . . . you are mistaken. . . .'
'Would you forsake me, Mama. . . ?'
Lula began to cry. 'I am your mother, Maria. If you murdered, even, I would stand by you. . . . But you . . . will suffer. . . . that's the worst part.'
'Papa's the worst part,' Maria [said]. . . (pp. 194-95).

Perhaps too conveniently but with historical accuracy, the problem is settled by the church updating its laws and Maria and Dimitri marrying in a Greek ceremony with an American-style reception.[11]

There are very well done scenes. Lula stoically endures her husband's love making when he gets drunk on his name day. A mother in purple crepe and with sweat marks under her arms pressures her adolescent daughter into singing and playing for company's entertainment; knowing she will be strapped later if she does not, the girl strikes the piano chords and belts out in Greek, "Sweet Mother Country." A sadder scene is Lula's early death from a heart attack. In the end a bereft Maria welcomes her father into her recreated family and becomes a mother to her younger brothers. There is less anger in Cotsakis than in Tabrah--perhaps it is easier to grow up Greek in the United States than it is Polish. One can hear Cotsakis' voice in the novel: "the smart person" picks up whatever is worth saving in his or heritage "and looks forward!" (p. 143)

In The Octagonal Heart (1956), Ariadne Thompson depicts many of the same struggles that Cotsakis does.[12] She resolves an intensely felt loss, however, through the process of authorship. In addition, she achieves a satisfying artistic unity by incorporating her ethnic heritage of Greek mythology into the book's structure. The novel's prologue introduces us to the house "Parnassus," on the outskirts of St. Louis, where Ariadne spent idyllic childhood summers. Five years old when the book's events begin and

in her mid-forties when she writes of her childhood, Thompson captures a sense of continuing struggle with her loss:

> The house is long since gone, and in the place where it once stood, surrounded by landscaped lawns and fruitful orchards, by rolling pastures and fertile farmland, there now flourishes that new development indigenous to the American countryside . . . the subdivision . . . [and] ranch houses. Against the sky where we used to watch Apollo's Flock--the soft, white clouds that gather together in the sky before sundown--television antennae now form their jagged patterns. . . . It is all gone now . . . and there is nothing of it left to see with the eyes or feel with the hand or touch or hear with any part of the body save the heart (pp. 12-13).

At the "heart" of the four-storied octagonal "Parnassus," built at the century's turn by the prosperous Jannopoulo family, is an interior large central hall where family activities occur. A "superior" Greek heritage is consciously transmitted by the adults to the olive-skinned children through religious observances like Greek Easter and nightly prayers, as well as by language, food, and music. Ariadne's mother Penelope regularly recounts tales from mythology. This closely knit extended family's sense of identity indeed stems from their bodies, names, history, language, religion, and place--a transported Parnassus.

The imaginative "heart" of the novel is Ariadne's. Her ironic self-portrait is of growth from romantic innocence and puzzlement into realistic awareness and selfhood. Woven into her struggles are others that encompass feminist and ethnic themes. Ariadne must sort out the sexual politics of her microcosmic world in which women are ever-present. The grandmother emigrated from Smyrna as a widow and has never adjusted to the United States. She is tiny, temperamental, imperious, given to hysterics, disliked and feared by children and grandchildren and dutifully cared for by her only unmarried daughter. Aunt Elene Jannopoulo, who runs the large household, is locked in conflict with her daughter Aphrodite who is

fighting for social independence and to go to medical school. Aphrodite is Ariadne's heroine--"the Goddess of Washington University." True to the patriarchal system of Greek society, however, the men are "omnipresent." Uncle Demetrius Jannopoulo is the real head of the house. A Greek church official actually intercedes on Aphrodite's behalf because he knows times are changing and women must become more self-reliant. Ariadne's priest-grandfather arranged her own parents' marriage. Ariadne's father permits her mother to sing with the St. Louis Symphony but she may not accept money for doing so. To Ariadne, her mother is a strange mixture of dutiful wife and mother and ardent champion of women's rights who argues, but only in private, for the vote and birth control. Nor will the mother discuss sex with her children, so that Ariadne must secretly consult Aphrodite's medical texts. Yet family life is generally happy and Ariadne's growth fulfilling.

The novel's epilogue returns to her loss when "Parnassus" burns to the ground. Her uncle builds a new house, smaller, more modern, but it is not the same. The old dog Hercules dies and is replaced by Toots and Brownie. Thompson has created an ethnic-American allegory and a memorial worthy of recognition.

Three Italian-American women have produced excellent fiction drawn from their experiences. Deep Grow the Roots (1940) by Mari Tomasi takes place in Italy in the Piedmont region of her parents' birth where she lived for a while as a young adult. Her second novel, Like Lesser Gods (1949), is set in the Green Mountains of Vermont, the region of her own birth.[13] While Deep Grow the Roots is principally about a peasant who just manages to harvest his first chestnut crop when Mussolini's armies go to war, the girl he loves is also central to the plot. Nina is housekeeper to the village priest. At first a charming, shallow flirt who is excited over the soldiers'

uniforms when mobilization reaches her village, her character deepens as she comes to care for the farmer Luigi. She begs him to flee from army service, but he can't bear to leave her or his land. In desparation, he mutilates himself by smashing his foot with a stone, and she sees him slowly die of lockjaw. Poor and alone at the end, unable to afford the luxury of grief, she is swept with bitterness that "her heart could not stay with him to watch. Already it was dispassionately contemplating the days ahead. . ." (p. 284). Another female portrait is of La Tonietta, the midwife and village nurse who manifests heroinism. When young and beautiful she refused to marry because she could not forget her mother's suffering at the hands of a brutal husband. Because La Tonietta loves children, however, she deliberately has three out of wedlock, raises them well, survives ostracism, and becomes a respected citizen.

In Like Lesser Gods the main occupation of the male immigrants in Granitetown (Barre, Vermont) is stonecutting which they have brought from Italy. Tomasi thus links continuity as well as dislocation to the ethnic experience. The women, represented chiefly by Maria Dalli, fear and despise the work. Maria begs her husband Pietro to leave the damp shed filled with granite dust, but he loves his work, and granite provides for the family's livelihood. Maria is the archetypal Demeter mother figure, and her favorite girl child is a Kore--Petra is a thin, intense child whom we first see crouching, chanting, and wielding a stick against the legs of a strike-breaker's child. Petra grows up to be a steady, devoted daughter. Ironically, granite provides, too, for death--it is used for gravestones, and Pietro dies of tuberculosis silicosis. But he lives long enough to witness the baptism of his first granddaughter. In Tomasi's world, whether in

Italy or America, sorrow and loss as well as joy are absorbed into the ancient eternal rhythms.

Ann Cavallaro Abelson has also created two novels of interest. Angels' Metal (1947) is, in part, about Helen Bianchi, a second generation girl who goes to college and achieves upward mobility as a factory office manager. But the story is equally about the College of St. Mary Regina and the role of Catholicism and morality in the lives of various Italians and Irish New Englanders. The Little Conquerors (1960) concentrates on the Italian-American experience through Abelson's development of the Giordano family of Abbott Street in a fictionalized New Haven.[14] Here again life's struggles follow Maslow's explanation. The Neopolitan-born father has died during the depression's height in 1938, so that the widow Annunziata and her seven children have no time to mourn. During one fierce winter she needs firewood for the kitchen stove and chops up the family's prized piano. Unsentimentally, even brilliantly drawn by Abelson, the tough, tyrannical Annunziata is a "primitive feminist": "Why to marry? To have master? To make more trouble? For why?" (p. 31) In the father's absence, the eldest son Vince, a rising political leader and power broker, appears to run things. But the mother maintains, as Richard Gambino has described it in Blood of My Blood, a crucial economic and social role.[15] Abelson's portrayal confirms this:

> In a peculiar way, Annunziata and her favored children were unregenerate snobs. Indifferent to origins, they cast a shrewd assessor's eye upon potentialities. 'Capua boy, he no good,' Annunziata would conclude with crisp finanlity. 'Dumbabell, he no learn school, get too big, bymby driva garbage truck. . . .' Capua's boy . . . had been, for practical purposes, liquadated (pp. 88-89).

The second generation's lives are also well-drawn. The Giordano daughters include Tess (Teresa), the eldest, who takes over the father's business and forces her easy-going husband into success and her son through

medical school. Connie (Concetta), in the middle, is a trapped and angry woman: "Me, I can't smoke, I can't drink. . . . Sometimes I think it's only us girls that haven't got nothin' got to be so goddam pure" (p. 57). She gets pregnant and must marry. Linda, the youngest, is the farthest removed from basic survival but the most like Annunziata. Beautiful and ruthless, she first becomes a teacher, then at thirty-five and with her mother's abetment marries a rich, powerful Italian.

The daughters-in-law include shrewd, practical Phyllis, married to Vince. Another, Rita, seems like a sweet, compliant girl to her husband Michael, and different from his determined, competitive sisters and domineering mother; then Rita becomes a successful businesswoman. German-Jewish Hilda marries John Giordano and they turn to the academic life. Although they like her, the other Giordano women are puzzled and embarrassed by Hilda's blue jeans, moccasins, and makeshift bookshelves--a nice observation by Abelson of different cultural assumptions.

Another portrait is that of Roberta, the third generation daughter of Phyllis and Vince, who has become accustomed to the right summer camps, horseback riding lessons, genuine cashmeres, and cultured pearls. Roberta likes being Italian but hates Abbott Street.

There is a memorial tone at the novel's close in the mid-1950's, for Abbott Street, once flourishing, once the Italian-American notion of the old country, the village, the regional landscape, the "sediment in the bloodstream" of immigrant America, is to be destroyed by urban renewal and a superhighway (p. 374). But there is hope, too, for the Giordanos are "the little conquerors." Several move to other neighborhoods, and Linda will divide her time between Italy and America.

The last novel in this study is No Steady Job for Papa (1966) by Marion Benasutti.[16] It shares much in common with Thompson's book in its successful self-dramatization of a young girl's efforts to achieve identity and independence. Benasutti begins as Tomasi does in Northern Italy, and her poverty-stricken father is also lured to America by the prospect of work. Benasutti is the most sceptical of all these writers, however, in her response to the American dream.

Benasutti also presents striking images of struggling women. Her mother at seventeen, with a baby and a mother-in-law in tow, succeeds in spite of enormous difficulties in following the father to America. The grandmother Nonna has not wanted to emigrate and never forgives her daughter-in-law for marrying her son and for the exodus. When Rosemary (Marion) is little the family lives in a Western Pennsylvania coal mining town. But Papa's work is dangerous, and Mama and Nonna, who manage a polite and necessary truce, persuade him to leave. Papa next is employed during World War I in the Philadelphia Navy Yard, but after that the gentle, studious, non-competititve man never works regularly again. Mama's modest desires for a nice house and a "steadyjob" (one word to Mama) for Papa are practically unobtainable. Mama must take in laundry and sewing, while Nonna raises the five daughters. Another mother-bulwark figure, Mama is softer than Annunziata but just as astute--what is wrong with the world, she observes, is that everyone is not permitted to have the basic necessities.

Rosemary is the novel's chief reference point. Prejudice, class and economic problems, religion, the mother-daughter bond, sibling difficulties, and sex are all tied to her central theme of her quest for self-ectualization. Behind the family's Back Street Philadelphia house is an exclusive club, and Mama sews dresses for "the rich ladies of the tennis courts." The child

confuses tennis "love," which she hears endlessly repeated on summer evenings, with romantic love, and tennis whites symbolize desirable men and society. One night she sneaks into the courts. A boy in tennis whites says, "It's one of those wops from Goat Hill. . ." (pp. 30-32 and 84). When the watchman kicks her out, she feels dirty, ashamed, and guilty. But she gains her first identification with and sympathy for all those who are so treated. She also begins to turn her romantic nature toward Catholicism, for her a satisfying religion. Another traumatic event occurs when a school acquaintance, a middle class Anglo snob, invites Rosemary to a party. Rosemary has pretended to be well-to-do, is found out, and is snubbed. Rosemary learns she must be true to herself. Rosemary and her oldest sister Trina have difficulty knowing each other. Trina must leave school in the seventh grade to work in the Germantown knitting mills, and in baffled anger cuts off her beautiful hair. Later she elopes to escape.

Rosemary's growing awareness is connected to her developing consciousness of sex. Her earliest memories are of her mother always undressing in the dark. Rosemary, "frantic with love," tries to hug and kiss her mother but realizes Mama is embarrassed to touch or be touched (p. 94). Rosemary sees herself naked for the first time when she is twelve and looks into a full-length mirror: "This was the first time we'd met, she and I, face to face. Naked, I did not know myself" (p. 115). An ignorant Rosemary's first menstruation is frightening, but Benasutti is wryly humorous when she also recalls that she believed she had mysteriously inherited the "Austro-Hungarian curse"--she had as a child listened to her father's stories of the region of his birth which was once occupied by the hated enemy, and she made an erroneous connection.

Benasutti imparts a feeling of deep and continuing loss:

> it seemed to me . . . that the end of the world came in small bits and pieces. When Mama left the Old Country, when Gran'ma gave up her beloved land . . . when someone died; when you lost your job--the world ended like that, a little bit at a time, and although a new and different world might begin, those little bits and pieces were gone forever (pp. 130-31).

But she also emphasizes hope and the possibility of love, friendship, and understanding, especially among women. Rosemary must leave school for work, but when one day she menstruates heavily and faints on the job, her mother allows her to return to school. A muted mythic symbolic structure reinforces her view that life is cyclic and holds beauty and happiness. When Trina becomes pregnant, the family is reconciled and the sisters become friends. Then as Nonna is dying, she asks that the lilacs outside her window be used to cover her when she is buried. Finally, because Mama has painfully saved on a tiny insurance policy over the years, the family is able to make a downpayment on an old Germantown farmhouse. They exultantly move, and Rosemary is given a room of her own, the privacy necessary to her development as a writer.

We learn in a postscript how Marion Benasutti's lifelong dream of becoming an author has fulfilled itself. Once when she lamented to a professor that all she knew to write about was her family and her own life, he replied that that was her subject. Now claiming poetic licence, she adds that she has recounted events the way they happened or the way she wanted them to happen. Benasutti has written outstanding ethnic autobiographical fiction. Her book and the others I have discussed here are an essential part of our American literary heritage.

Notes

[1]Edith Miniter, Our Natupski Neighbors (New York: Henry Holt, 1916); hereafter all references to this edition appear in the text. Rev. of Our Natupski Neighbors, The New York Times, 14 January, 1917, 22:13.

[2]Diane Johnson, "Ghosts," The New York Review of Books, 24, No. 1 (3 February, 1977), 19-20 and 29, is a discussion of anger in autobiographical fiction. Cecyle S. Neidle, in America's Immigrant Women (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1975), has subtitled her chapter on immigrant women writers, "Real Truth versus Artistic Truth" (p. 251), and makes the point that the two truths are fused.

[3]Harold Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 40.

[4]Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Female Imagination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975); Ellen Moers, Literary Women (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 113.

[5]Abraham Harold Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

[6]Rose Basile Green, The Italian-American Novel: A Document of the Interaction of Two Cultures (Rutherford, N. J.: Farleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1974), has identified optimism as a quality of Italian-American fiction.

[7]Another novel by a non-Polish woman observor makes a similar point about New Englanders learning from the immigrants and an additional one, symbolized by a childless couple, that the Puritan tradition is worn out. Cornelia James Cannon, Heirs (Boston: Little, Brown, 1930), portrays Ewa, the urchin Polish child with beauty, energy, and a passion for living, as one of the land's new "heirs."

[8]Ruth M. Tabrah, Pulaski Place (New York: Harper, 1950).

[9]Helena Znaniecki Lopata, Polish Americans: Status Competition in an Ethnic Community (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. xiii.

[10]Roxanne Cotsakis, The Wing and the Thorn (Atlanta: Tupper and Love, 1952); hereafter all references to this edition appear in the text. Both Tabrah and Cotsakis have published other material, but the books under discussion here are related best to the ethnic experience.

[11]Theodore Saloutos, The Greeks in the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), documents how the first generation has tried to arrange marriages for the second, believing these would provide economic security and happiness for all concerned (p. 315). Saloutos' study is excellent on church history, too.

[12]Ariadne Thompson, The Octagonal Heart (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956); hereafter all references to this edition appear in the text.

[13]Mari Tomasi, Deep Grow the Roots (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1940); Mari Tomasi, Like Lesser Gods (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1949). Hereafter all references to these editions appear in the text.

[14]Ann Abelson, Angels' Metal (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947); Ann Cavallaro Abelson, The Little Conquerors (New York: Random House, 1960). Hereafter all references to the latter edition appear in the text.

[15]Richard Gambino, Blood of My Blood: The Dilemma of the Italian-Americans (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), p. 154. Gambino's study of the continuity of Italian culture in America is very good, but he neglects the role that Italian-American literature plays in overcoming second and third generation dilemmas.

[16]Marion Benasutti, No Steady Job for Papa (New York: Vanguard Press, 1966); hereafter all references to this edition appear in the text.

Maple Leaf